

Understanding and Negotiating the Job Offer

Congratulations! You've been offered a job! Is it THE ONE? There are several items to evaluate before accepting the position. Be sure you thoroughly understand all the factors that have been presented.

Keep in mind that the starting salary isn't the only part of your compensation. Benefits can typically add another 30-40% to many salaries and often include: Life insurance, health (medical, dental, vision) plans, vacation, retirement programs, tuition benefits, and holidays.

Understand the following:

- Health Insurance: How much will you pay and what type of coverage choices will you (and your dependents) receive?
- Retirement Plan: Does the company offer a defined benefit retirement or a 401K contribution program? Take advantage of this at the earliest opportunity.
- Vacation/sick leave and holidays: How many vacation and sick days do you get per year? What are the official company holidays? Is flex scheduling an option?
- Performance evaluations: How often will you have a scheduled evaluation? Is it connected to salary increases?
- Professional Development: Is in-house training provided? Are there opportunities to attend conferences in your field? Is tuition reimbursement available?
- Organizational Culture: What is the dress code? Are there casual days?
- Lifestyle: What is the typical work week? What are the expectations regarding working evenings and weekends?

Negotiation tips:

- Be enthusiastic about the offer, the job, the organization and your potential supervisor. Be sure you really want to work there.
- Research the industry. Know the range of salaries for your industry. The internet sites of www.salary.com and www.datamasters.com are great resources for salary and cost of living information.
- Honestly, as a recent graduate with limited experience, you may not have a lot of room to negotiate. Be reasonable and professional when making requests.
- Besides salary there are other forms of compensation you can try to negotiate: sign-on bonus, moving expenses, stock options, work hours, vacation time, parking privileges, professional development or education reimbursement.
- Listen carefully and remain quiet during the negotiation conversation. You can express dissatisfaction with a low salary offer by using non-verbal communication. This may open the door to negotiate non-salary options.

Seal the deal:

- Ask for the offer in writing. Review carefully and be sure you understand all the terms.
- Talk to the employer about how much time they can allow you to make a decision.
- Commit to the agreed upon deadline and follow-up with your response.

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